

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

Kremlin Power Struggle

an  
Over the past ~~two~~ years, /increasing number of scraps of evidence of Malenkov's loss of power have come to light, but the secret of his dramatic resignation and admission of guilt <sup>will</sup> was kept until he appeared at the Supreme Soviet this Tuesday.

On February 6, Krushchev saw Hearst and Kingsbury Smith, two days before the resignation, and ridiculed "Western reports that a split might be developing between him and Malenkov," describing the idea as "wishful thinking."

The sudden summoning home of Soviet envoys from the USA, Britain, France, Eastern Germany, and other places, and the calling of the Supreme Soviet a month ahead of normal time, indicated the likelihood that big events were taking place in Moscow, but left uncertain what they might be.

*also true to date the decision.*  
Malenkov's fall is not to be ascribed to any of the causes specifically set forth in his "admission of guilt." It may well be that he had not shown the elements of leadership which would have made him the dictator, but he was less responsible for agricultural difficulties than Khrushchev and he had as much experience in the economic field as his successor, Bulganin.

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

What really happened was that Malenkov lost out in the second round of a drawn out personal power struggle which began as soon as Stalin died. *Beginning of end of "collective" leadership.*

When Malenkov "surrendered" or was forced out of the position of principal Communist Party Secretary in March 1953, that is, after Stalin's death, he lost the sinews of political power in the USSR. Trading the post of Party Secretary for the more honorific role of Prime Minister was a bad bargain.

The Soviet leaders often spoke of "collective" or Committee form of government in the Kremlin after Stalin's death. There were four main elements of political power in "collective" setup. There were (1) the old Bolsheviks (Molotov, Bulganin and Kaganovich), (2) the professional manipulators of the Communist Party control mechanism (Malenkov initially, and then Khrushchev), (3) the secret police (Beria & Co.), and (4) the emergent military leaders (Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Konev.)

7 Not many months after Stalin's death, Malenkov joined with Khrushchev and Soviet Army leaders in eliminating Beria. *Marshall* General Konev was the judge who pronounced Beria's death sentence.

~~TOP SECRET~~

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

~~Afterwards, then, it~~ had been  
In June, 1953, Beria was caught red-handed in a plot to seize power and liquidated, with the Armed forces for the first time playing a role in a serious political struggle. ~~Afterwards,~~ Khrushchev, by developing his position as Party Secretary, proved more powerful than Malenkov as Premier, and now Malenkov has been eliminated. This leaves Khrushchev the Party manager in the dominant position, with the backing of the old Bolsheviks probably being the major element of power behind him, while the influence of the military is at an all-time high in the history of the Soviet Union. It is ~~necessary~~ <sup>important</sup> to remember, however, that the Armed forces' spokesman in the Politburo is himself an old Bolshevik; namely, Bulganin, who started his military career at the exalted level of Lt. General and who -- because of his lack of real battle experience -- is understood to be referred to by his military colleagues as General "Rabbit."

Lest the Western world should let Bulganin's appointment as Premier and Marshal Zhukov's designation as Defense Minister <sup>lead it</sup> to the conclusion that the Armed Forces are to take over the USSR, Molotov in his speech reminded us that the Soviet Army "has for every hundred men, 77 Communists and young Communists," ~~and the Communists~~ using as his reason for making this point the statement that "the young Communists know particularly well

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

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how to defend the victory of Communism from aggressors."

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in commenting on the recent crisis, stressed the fact that

"the Army has now gained the position in the government formerly held by the MVD-MGB [secret police] complex, but ~~and~~ they are still closely controlled by the Communist Party."

In the long run, a Committee form of government will never endure in the Soviet Union. Someone must emerge ~~as~~ as the leader and we may be seeing the beginning of a struggle for power involving Khrushchev, the Party, the old Bolsheviks, and the military. The present Soviet leaders will probably continue to give lip service to the collective leadership idea -- even Stalin did this in 1925 when he said "It would be impossible to lead the Party except collectively. It would be stupid to dream or speak of it." Stalin said this shortly after he had eased out Trotsky, just as he had won a clear decision over <sup>(Zinoviev and)</sup> Kamenev -- and a number of years before he liquidated all opposition elements and became supreme.

How long the present balance will last is anybody's guess, but Khrushchev appears to be playing the cagey Stalin game of quietly gathering reins of power without pushing too fast and consolidating his rivals -- who will gang up on any claimant to Stalin's power if they get a chance. *That's why he*

*did take the No. 1 job*

~~TOP SECRET~~

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

*What part deal*

Economic Policy Elements

*play?*

*The*  
~~This traditional, intricate, no-holds-barred~~ Kremlin struggle for power came to a head over a ~~bitter policy fight. It was fought out~~ in terms of a complicated and somewhat theoretical debate <sup>as to</sup> the proper emphasis the USSR should put on heavy industry and, implicitly, Soviet war potential.

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~~As a practical problem,~~ the question was whether to continue to give first priority to heavy industry and boost Soviet armaments production at the expense -- if necessary -- of the "new course" policy of providing more consumer goods and increasing standards of living.

The consumer-goods program was commonly identified with Malenkov, although Khrushchev and other leaders have also extensively committed themselves to it. *Any* No major shift away from general philosophy of consumer-goods program, especially increased agricultural production, ~~is likely since program was popular and forthright reversal~~ *Secrets* would make Malenkov a hero and Khrushchev a heel.

*the*  
~~Major real policy change at this time is 12% rise in budgeted defense expenditures for 1955 -- contrasted with no increase since Stalin's death~~ (military expenditures levelled off first time in budget for 1953).

*was announced as part of the new policy to scare the Western Europe about the Russian*

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NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

*What part did*

Foreign Policy Elements

*play?*

This struggle for power, fought out over Soviet economic policy, derived its intensity (and ended in a major crisis with political heads falling) because of foreign policy problems USSR is facing. The Budget increasing defense expenditures was introduced with a speech stressing that there had been "no changes in the international situation which give us reason to relax attention to questions of strengthening our defensive potential."

Most Soviet leaders evidently have come to feel that international tension has sharply increased recently despite Malenkov's repeated statements that it would lessen as a result of "negotiations" and "normalization" of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Western nations.

Moscow confronted with tough decisions on what to do about prospective German rearmament and degree of Soviet commitment to assist China in view of the Formosan "liberation" crisis.

Controversy over such foreign policy issues probably played <sup>a</sup> an important *role* ~~part~~ in the decision to unload Malenkov at this particular time. He ~~was~~ was popularly identified with the shift from the tough Stalin line to the "peaceful co-existence" line, with emphasis on negotiated settlement

of differences with the West. We have several first hand reports

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

of ~~incidents~~ clashes between Malenkov, who was always plugging "peace," and Krushchev, who has always been more bellicose and vituperative in speaking of Western nations and individuals. About a year ago, when Malenkov was clearly still calling the tune, Krushchev observed to Western guests at a diplomatic affair that the Soviet Armed Forces were perfectly able to inflict a lesson on would be aggressors. Malenkov was visibly annoyed and audibly whispered an order to Khrushchev to change the subject and talk about "peace," which Khrushchev did. Just a few months ago, at the big Soviet party commemorating the October Revolution, the French Ambassador was drawn into debate by Krushchev, who indicated that if the Paris Accords were ratified, there was nothing further to be done. At this point, Malenkov joined the group and commented: "There is always something to be done."

Molotov does not appear ever to have fully shared Malenkov's views, and his vigorous speech of Tuesday probably set the tone of Soviet diplomacy under the new leadership. Along with many other strong statements, he said: 1. The foreign policy of the United States "can mean nothing else but preparation of another world war, a war for the restoration of imperialism's world domination." 2. "The United States pursues a policy of war directed against the USSR," China and the other Orbit countries.

~~TOP SECRET~~

NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

3. "The appetites of aggressive imperialist circles and their sinister reactionary dreams are not confined to the people's democracies alone. They would also like to return our country to capitalism."

Molotov's speech contains many echoes from earlier, somewhat off-beat utterances by Krushchev who frequently mentioned Hitler's destruction as a warning to the Western nations, who commonly referred to the U. S. and its Allies as "the enemy" and in June 1954 (in Prague) said, characteristically: "We know the bourgeois politicians are chattering idly. They think they can intimidate us! But nothing can frighten us, because if they know what a bomb means, so do we."

Although there may not be any change in main elements of Soviet foreign policy, I think we must be prepared for a harder, shriller manner, reminiscent of the "tough talk" of Stalin's and Vyshinsky's heyday.

Whatever happens, <sup>immediate</sup> ~~main~~ aim of Soviet policy will continue to be to isolate US politically from its European and Asian Allies.

*Neither Economic or Foreign Policy fully explain the Spectacle the Soviet Union has presented to the World. As a Russian, I see the "Goat".*



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NSC BRIEFING

10 February 1955

*An interesting*

*popular*  
Somewhat surprising element in picture is appointment of Zhukov,  
a real military hero, as Defense Minister. Zhukov is known as a wartime  
friend of Eisenhower and this fact suggests regime may still hope to

*Here maybe the*  
negotiate with US -- although "talking tough" and trying to drive hard  
*cannot*  
~~bargains~~. Asked this week about a 1945 exchange of pledges with

General Eisenhower to effect that neither US nor USSR would attack the

other, Zhukov said: "I consider I was not wrong ... and I hope General

Eisenhower was right." He also said, in connection with a remark about

*When*  
Soviet-US relations not being "quite suitable" for his visiting the United

States, as he had planned in 1945, "I know our relations will get better;

then I ~~hope~~ hope to be able to visit the United States."

*CP*

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